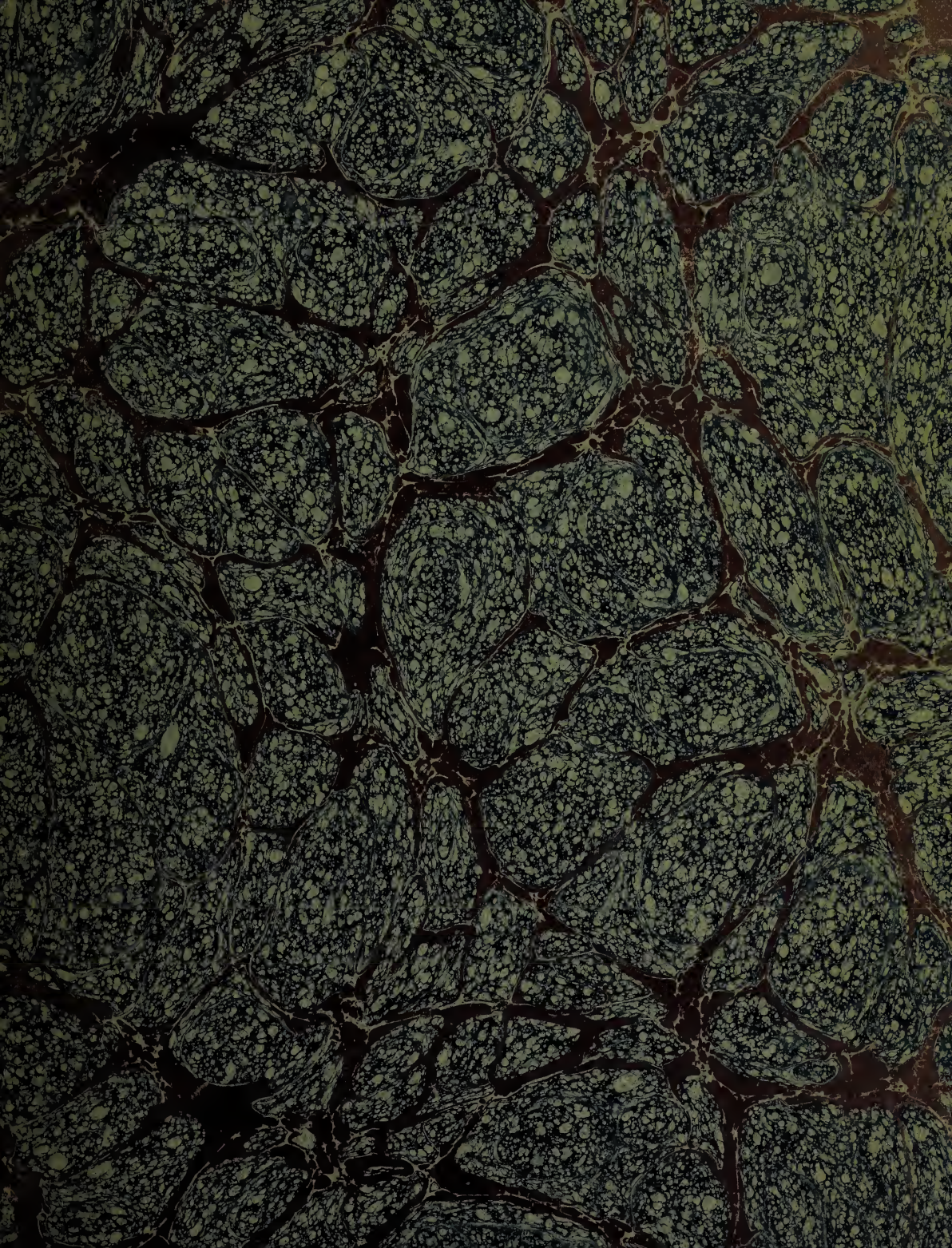




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S E R M O N, &c.



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S E R M O N
PREACHED BEFORE THE
S T E W A R D S
OF THE
WESTMINSTER DISPENSARY
AT THEIR
ANNIVERSARY MEETING,
IN
CHARLOTTE-STREET CHAPEL, APRIL 1785.
WITH AN APPENDIX.

B Y R. W A T S O N, D. D.

LORD BISHOP OF LANDAFF.

L O N D O N :

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S E R M O N, &c.

PROVERBS, CHAP. XXII. VER. 2.

THE RICH AND THE POOR MEET TOGETHER, THE LORD
IS THE MAKER OF THEM ALL.

IT would be foreign to the purpose of this meeting to enter into a disquisition concerning the origin of property—Suffice it to observe, that it is a state of things which has taken place in every age and country of which we have any account: even the savage inhabitants of the uncultivated parts of the world, who derive their support from the casual success of the chase, have their separate districts for hunting; and an infringement of that species of property is one of the chief causes of their barbarous hostilities. Amongst all civilized nations, the security of property constitutes one of the principal branches of their jurisprudence. From a state of property, however introduced, springs up a division of mankind into two classes, one possessing more, the other possessing less,

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or nothing at all : the more and the less may vary through a great many degrees, yet the division still remains certain ; and the consequent distinction of mankind into poor and rich has been generally established. It is not possible to fix any precise mark by which these two classes may be discriminated from each other. We might, indeed, agree to call that man rich, who had any thing which strictly speaking was his own ; and that man poor, who had no property at all : yet this would be a distinction opposite, in many instances, to our general notions ; for he who can maintain himself by his manual labour or ingenuity, is often esteemed, and justly esteemed, richer than he, who is possessed of a trifling property in land, money, or goods.

God gave the earth to be a means of support to the whole human race ; and we have all of us a right to be maintained by what it produces : but he never meant that the idle should live upon the labour of the industrious, or that the flagitious should eat the bread of the righteous : he hath therefore permitted a state of property to be every where introduced ; that the industrious might enjoy the rewards of their diligence ; and that those who would not work, might feel the punishment of their laziness. In the Jewish government, which was formed according to the especial appointment of God, he suffered some to sell their property, and others to buy it ; some to become poor, and others to become rich. He appointed, indeed, that the land which had been sold out of
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any family should, in the year of the Jubilee, return to that family again; but, even under this constitution, a man might reduce himself and his family to beggary for fifty years. And that many, either through misfortune or mismanagement, would actually become poor, even in the Jewish state, which was peculiarly calculated to preserve an equality of possession, was so naturally to be expected, that God expressly said—*The poor should never cease out of the land.*

This division of mankind into poor and rich, is of all others the most general; indeed it ultimately comprehends the rest. Men are sometimes classed into different orders, according to the diversity of the professions or trades which they pursue; but the end aimed at, by men of every profession and every trade, is to advance themselves from a state of poverty to a state of riches, or from the possession of a smaller portion of wealth to that of a larger. Men, on the other hand, are addicted to various vices, and pursue a strange multiplicity of follies; but the usual end of both vice and folly is to reduce men from riches to poverty. It may be truly said, that all the pursuits of mankind, whether they be laudable or disreputable, have a natural tendency to introduce a disparity of property; to establish the great distinction of the human species into Rich and Poor. This distinction, arising, as it were necessarily, from the situations and dispositions of mankind, cannot be otherwise considered than as the natural appointment of God himself—*The rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker*

of them all. The Lord hath made every thing for the best ; all his dispensations are the result of his wisdom, and the fruit of his goodness : let us try whether it may not be shewn that this, amongst the rest, springs from the same sources.

I need employ no time in persuading the Rich that this is a very good system of things ; they feel, or they fancy that they feel, the advantages resulting from an unequal distribution of property, and would be sorry to have any change made in this matter. The chief difficulty will be to reconcile the poorer sort to their lot ; yet I cannot help thinking that, if they will divest themselves of prejudice, they will see reason to be perfectly contented with their condition, and be satisfied that things could not have been better ordered.

In the first place then it may be observed that, in this country at least, slavery is not allowed ; would to God that it existed no where ! Every man amongst us is equally capable of acquiring property ; the reward of his industry and frugality cannot be ravished from him by the tyranny of an unfeeling master : through the faults or the misfortunes of his progenitors he may have been born in a low situation, but it must be through his own if he continues in it. Honesty, diligence, and frugality, will go a great way in lifting him, if not to much eminence, at least above indigence, and it may be to opulence. We see this frequently happening ; those who have been upright and careful servants often becoming re-
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putable masters and distinguished citizens ; and that it does not happen oftener, is not so much to be attributed to the difficulty of the thing itself, as to the little pains they take to accomplish it. The golden crown of diligence and œconomy is held out as a prize to all ; every one who runs may reach it : but if, instead of running with alacrity and circumspection the appointed course, we loiter away our time, suffering ourselves to be carried from the pursuit by every little allurements of idleness or pleasure, whom have we to blame but ourselves ? He who is idle and extravagant in his youth, who will not bow down his body to labour, or who labours but just enough to pamper his body in riotous living, as thousands of manufacturers do, wasting in three days of beastly drunkenness what they have acquired by four days of industry, this man has no right to complain if he finds his old age destitute and comfortless, if he remains through life in the state of poverty in which he was born. There is scarcely any old person but must confess that he might have brought up his family with credit, without being burthensome to the parish, had he from his earliest youth used his best diligence in acquiring property, and his utmost caution in not needlessly parting with it : so that it must be owned this unequal distribution of property is a great spur to industry and frugality in the lower classes of life ; and habits of industry and frugality bring with them modesty, humility, temperance, indeed so many virtues that a finer system could not perhaps have been possibly formed, for exalting human nature, for bringing men to a right understanding

derstanding of their duty, to a reverence for whatever is good and praise-worthy.

A second consideration of great weight in this matter is, that the poor would be no gainers by an equal distribution of property: the rich indeed might be losers by it, they might be deprived of some superfluities; but the poor would not be better provided with necessaries. For if all men were upon a level, he who is now doomed to labour must labour still; he must still continue to plough the ground, to thrash the corn, to dig the fuel, to work at the loom, the anvil, and the mill; he would still have occasion for food, fire, and clothing; and he could not expect that, in this so much and so wrongly admired state of equality, another would undertake to procure these articles for him. At present the poor have a property in little but their labour, they are forced to labour for their subsistence; and if things were brought upon a level, I do not apprehend how they could procure subsistence without labour. They may wish perhaps to change situations with the rich, but such a change is not the case in point; the present rich would then become the poor, and would have an equal right to demand an alteration in their favour. The object of inquiry is, whether the poor would be in any-wise bettered, by having the lands of this or any other country equally divided amongst its inhabitants; and it seems to me that they would not.—Let us look at this matter in another light. The rich cannot either eat or drink more viands than other men; their
bodies

bodies are not above the common size, nor do they require any extraordinary quantity of covering to protect them from the inclemency of the seasons ; upon any supposition of property they must be fed and clothed : they are at present fed somewhat more deliciously, and clothed somewhat more sumptuously than other men are ; but this seems not to be either any real advantage to them, or disadvantage to others. The fortunes of the rich are expended in superfluities, in things not necessary either for the being, or the well-being of the human race ; and in being thus expended, they are dispersed amongst the poor in a thousand ways. Every elegant entertainment which a man gives, every costly suit which he puts on, every magnificent building which he erects, every means by which he expends his property, are blessings to the poor, and reduce things as it were to a level. The rich man in all this may probably but consult his vanity, or gratify his appetite ; he may have no thought about the poor in what he does, yet the effect is the same as if he did think of them ; and thousands are more comfortably maintained by administering to the real or artificial wants of the rich, than they could be upon the taking place of an equal partition of property.

A third argument, to induce the poor to be contented with their situations, arises from the little contentment which rich men seem to have in theirs. Man consists of two parts, body and mind : idleness is the bane of both ; the body, by indolence, becomes enervated, unequal to fatigue, and prone to disease ;

if the wind blows freshly on it, or the sun happens to scorch it, or the rain to wet it, its languid possessor is filled with no causeless apprehension of succeeding maladies, and life itself is often endangered by the disaster. An idle mind is still a more troublesome companion than an idle body ; it preys upon itself, becomes peevish and discontented ; or else it exerts a sort of activity in trifles, is eager in the pursuit of fashionable follies, insipid amusements, or ruinous vices. Riches exempt the body from the wholesome fatigue of labour, and the mind from the no less salutary fatigue of thought, and frequently become the cause of complete ruin to the whole man. There are many men of great wealth and distinguished rank in our own, and in every other country, with bodies so shattered by debauchery, and minds so debased by folly, that a healthy day-labourer would not wish to exchange situations with them. These evils do not necessarily attend riches : we have some illustrious examples of men, who enjoy their wealth with temperance and good sense ; yet the contrary happens so frequently, that a poor man has little cause to quarrel with his poverty, since there is a great chance that, had he been richer, he would have been less happy in himself, a less comfort to his family, less pleasing to God, and less useful to mankind.

A fourth argument, in support of the rectitude of this unequal distribution of property, may be taken from the equality with which God has dispersed the chief ingredients of human happiness. If, indeed, you place the happiness of life in drinking

drinking delicious wines, in wearing expensive apparel, in being attended by numerous servants, in exhibiting a great show of magnificence to the world, in feeding your pride and pampering your sensuality, then may you wish for riches ; but you will certainly make a wrong judgment of what is for your good, none of these things have any real worth in them, and those who possess them will tell you so. The main blessings which constitute the supreme felicity of human life, are within the reach of almost every one of us. The laws of the country secure to the meanest, the object of the Apostles, contentment, food, and raiment ; and the God of nature has given us air, and light, and sleep, the warmth of the sun, and the dew of Heaven ; these are the things essential to our well-being, and of these we have all an equal share.

Thus, whether we consider the unequal distribution of property as the mother of industry, and of those many mild and modest virtues which adorn our nature ; or whether we respect the little advantage which the lowest class would hope to obtain, were all things brought upon a level ; or look at the little solid comfort which riches seem to bring to their possessors, and the great evils to which they expose them ; or lastly, reflect upon the general blessings which God has bestowed with a liberal hand upon us all, we may see reason enough to admire his wisdom, and to adore his goodness for having made both rich and poor ; the rich and the poor meet together, the Lord is the maker of them all.

It remains that I say a word or two, more particularly suited to the purpose of our meeting ; and nothing can be more suitable than to pursue the subject we are upon by briefly stating the respective duties of the rich and poor : they are met together by God's appointment ; and it is his will that they discharge with cheerfulness and fidelity the duties of their respective stations.

The first duty which the rich owe towards the poor, is to see that they want not the means necessary for the preservation of life. All the laws in the world can never justly appropriate the earth and its productions to such a degree, as that any living soul must perish for want of them. By whatever compact, tacit or express, you suppose your property to have first commenced, or to have been afterwards secured to you, it is still not yours in cases of extreme necessity ; life is the gift of God, and in giving life he gave the means to sustain it, and no human jurisdiction can acquire any right to deprive us of this first gift of Heaven. But though it be here contended, that no man can have so exclusive a property in his goods, as with justice to debar the poor from partaking with him in cases of extreme necessity, yet, let it be well remembered, that no sanction is thereby given to theft and rapine, nor any encouragement to idleness ; those who can labour ought to do it, and those who cannot labour are not at liberty to purloin by stealth, or seize by violence what is necessary for their support ; the law has provided it for them ;
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they have a right to demand it at the hands of the magistrate, and he will fail in his duty if he does not see that it is properly supplied to them. Perhaps it may be thought an hard case, that you an honest and industrious man, possessed of little more property than what is sufficient for the maintenance of your own family, should be compelled to contribute towards that of those who have wasted their substance in riotous living, and are reduced to poverty through their own prodigality. There is, it must be owned, some hardship in this case; but every human institution has its defects, and is liable to abuse; it is possible now and then that a very unworthy member may be supported by the rates of your parish, but he is still your fellow creature, and has a right to live; he is sick, infirm, aged, some how or other incapable of labour; and, whatever may have been his past conduct, he is now become a certain object of compassion.

The duty next in importance to the supplying the poor with the means of preserving life, is the treating them with a fellow feeling kindness. Nothing breaks the heart of those who are bowed down by misfortune, so much as the insolence of those who are above them. This is of all the kinds of pride the most senseless and inhuman. Without a diversity of ranks the affairs of this world cannot well go on; some there must be to perform the more servile offices of life; but their nature is not debased by the baseness of their condition; they are not transformed to beings of an inferior order by being destined

to an inferior station ; they are still our brethren in Christ, children of the same heavenly Father, and heirs of the same heavenly promises with the richest of the sons of men ; and as to their earthly condition, they are still of the same shape with ourselves ; they have the same senses, are equally susceptible of pleasure and pain, are sprung from the same stock, composed of the same materials, liable to the same accidents, subject to the same disorders, and in a few years will be hidden in the bosom of the same earth, and reduced to similar masses of corruption. Thou whose heart is lifted up because of thy riches, and who in the might of thy power despisest the poor, and refusest to relieve his distress, and makest light of his sufferings : think of the catastrophe which awaits thee, and be not deceived by the pride of thine heart !

It must not, however, be thought that the rich are the only persons who have duties to perform, and that the poor may urge the misery of their lot as an excuse for the neglect of theirs : I will briefly mention three duties which especially belong to them.

First, The poor owe to the rich gratitude, thankfulness, and respect for all the good they receive from them. If their wants are not supplied to the extent which they may wish, it does not become them to be transported with resentment against their richer neighbours, nor presently to pour forth calumnies and complaints as if there was no charity amongst mankind.

mankind. Charity is often a private virtue known only to a man's self; and he who refuses to give an alms is not, therefore, to be censured by the object that solicits it as an hard-hearted man: he may have a call for all he can spare, which you know not of; and it may be his charity is better placed than in relieving you: if it is otherwise, the matter is between God and himself; you are no judge of it; you will do no good by murmuring; you will deservedly find the door of mercy fast bolted against yourself. Another duty of the poor is foresight. They ought in their years of youth and strength to make some provision against the wants of old age, and not encourage themselves in expensive doings whilst they are young, from the assurance of having a legal support provided for them when they grow old. They must not in a spirit of hypocrisy make a greater show of distress than they really feel, lest they should thereby dry up the streams of general benevolence, or divert them from refreshing those who are in real want. They must not in a spirit of idleness neglect any opportunity of being honestly employed, but they are to work with quietness as much as they are able; for it is the Apostles command, If any will not work, neither let him eat. When the hand of industry is disabled by accident, enfeebled by disease, palsied by old age, any how rendered incapable of supporting its master, then and not till then should it be stretched out to receive the contributions of the benevolent; and then we trust it will never be drawn back empty.

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A third duty of the poor is not to give way to either envy or despair. There is nothing indeed in the situation of rich men, if the matter be rightly considered, which can become a subject of envy ; and if their means of happiness were less exceptionable than they seem to be, yet have they as great a right to enjoy them, and probably will make as good an use of them, as the poor man would do, who looks upon every station above him as his due, regarding with a malignant eye what he cannot attain : and as to despair, there is no need why any one should give way to that ; when he is in the worst possible situation, he has the providence of God for his protection, and this will assuredly work out something for his relief, unless by wickedness or despondency he counteracts the efficacy of its benign influence.

Lastly, It is the duty of us all, rich and poor, to be kindly affectioned one towards another, well keeping in mind that we are all travellers on the same road, all servants of the same master, all accountable to him for every step we take, all of us entrusted with his property ; and if he hath given more to some, and less to others, it is not out of partiality towards any of us, but that he might make trial of our temper, and see how we were disposed to treat each other in the use of what he hath given us. Were all men upon a level, there would be no room for the exercise of charity and compassion on the one hand, nor of patience and gratitude on the other ; the rich not being called upon to part with his

property, would not know whether he was the servant of Mammon or of God. In a word, the unequal distribution of this world's goods, is a state most admirably fitted for the producing in mankind the great Christian virtues of content, patience, meekness, of universal benevolence, compassion, and good will, without which, though we should possess the whole world, we shall certainly lose our own souls; and with which, though we should possess nothing at all in this world, we shall certainly have, which is the main thing to be considered by us all, never ending happiness in that which is to come.

An occasion is now offered to those who abound in this world's goods to shew the benignity of their tempers; and it is an occasion which is liable to no exception. Medicine is not palatable; no one will apply for it who can do without it; nor will any one use it longer than he wants it: there will be no fictitious claims on your benevolence; no waste in the application of your bounty. I need not weary your attention in enlarging on the utility of the Institution, which hath hitherto prospered in your hands, it is universally acknowledged; it is spoken ill of by none but those who do not understand it; thousands of individuals have had cause to bless you, and the state itself is indebted to you for the life of every individual which has been saved to the community, through your munificence. But it is not from the state that you must expect the reward of your well-doing, the blessings of the poor will be your passports to Heaven; God himself will reward
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you, and not suffer any one instance of your kindness to your fellow creatures to be forgotten at the dreadful day of retribution. It is a day which is at hand to many of us, which is approaching with an hasty and unheeded pace upon us all ! In that day the pride of learning will be abased, the towerings of ambition will be brought low, the insolence of wealth will be subdued, all the mighty din and bustle of the world will cease, and nothing will remain to comfort us but the remembrance of the good which we have done. It behoves us all to think soberly, seriously, and frequently of the event of that day ; and if that reflection should not be sufficient to dispose our hearts to further such a work of mercy as now solicits our protection, all human means of exciting our compassion would be vain ; we ought to pray to God with all possible sincerity, that he would remove from us that hardness of heart, that contempt of his word, that insensibility of our spiritual danger which threatens our eternal perdition ; for unquestionably we are in the gall of bitterness, and our end will not be in peace.

A P P E N D I X.

THE Sermon which is now, for the first time, published, was written many years ago; it may, perhaps, on that account be more worthy of the attention of those for whose benefit it is designed. If it shall have any effect in calming the perturbation which has been lately excited, and which still subsists in the minds of the lower classes of the community, I shall not be ashamed of having given to the world a composition in every other light uninteresting. I will take this opportunity of adding, with the same intention, a few reflections on the present circumstances of our own, and of a neighbouring country.

With regard to France—I have no hesitation in declaring, that the object which the French seemed to have in view at the commencement of their revolution, had my hearty approbation. The object was to free themselves and their posterity from arbitrary power. I hope there is not a man in Great Britain so little sensible of the blessings of that free Constitution under which he has the happiness to live; so entirely

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tirely dead to the interests of general humanity, as not to wish that a Constitution similar to our own might be established, not only in France, but in every despotic state in Europe; not only in Europe, but in every quarter of the globe.

It is one thing to approve of an end, another to approve of the means by which an end is accomplished. I did not approve of the means by which the first revolution was effected in France.—I thought that it would have been a wiser measure to have abridged the oppressive privileges, and to have lessened the enormous number of the nobility, than to have abolished the order.—I thought that the state ought not in justice to have seized any part of the property of the church, till it had reverted, as it were, to the community, by the death of its immediate possessors.—I thought that the king was not only treated with unmerited indignity; but that too little authority was left him, to enable him, as the chief executive magistrate, to be useful to the state.—These were some of my reasons for not approving the means by which the first revolution in France was brought about. As to other evils which took place on the occasion, I considered them certainly as evils of importance; but at the same time as evils inseparable from a state of civil commotion, and which I conceived would be more than compensated by the establishment of a limited monarchy.

The French have abandoned the constitution they had

at first established, and have changed it for another. No one can reprobate with more truth than I do both the means, and the end of this change.—The end has been the establishment of a republic—Now, a republic is a form of government, which, of all others, I most dislike—and I dislike it for this reason; because of all forms of government, scarcely excepting the most despotic, I think a republic the most oppressive to the bulk of the people: they are deceived in it with the shew of liberty; but they live in it, under the most odious of all tyrannies, the tyranny of their equals.—With respect to the means by which this new republic has been erected in France, they have been sanguinary, savage, more than brutal. They not merely fill the heart of every individual with commiseration for the unfortunate sufferers; but they exhibit to the eye of contemplation, an humiliating picture of human nature, when its passions are not regulated by religion, or controlled by law.—I fly with terror and abhorrence, even from the altar of Liberty, when I see it stained with the blood of the aged, of the innocent, of the defenceless sex, of the ministers of religion, and of the faithful adherents of a fallen monarch.—My heart sinks within me when I see it streaming with the blood of the monarch himself.—Merciful God! strike speedily, we beseech thee, with deep contrition, and sincere remorse, the obdurate hearts of the relentless perpetrators and projectors of these horrid deeds, lest they should suddenly sink into eternal and extreme perdition, loaded with

an unutterable weight of unrepented, and, except through the blood of Him whose religion they reject, inexpressible sin.

The monarch, you will tell me, was guilty of perfidy and perjury.—I know not, that he was guilty of either ; but admitting that he has been guilty of both—who, alas ! of the sons of men, is so confident in the strength of his own virtue, so assured of his own integrity and intrepidity of character, as to be certain, that under similar temptations he would not have been guilty of similar offences ? Surely it would have been no diminution of the sternness of new republican virtue, no disgrace to the magnanimity of a great nation, if it had pardoned the perfidy which its own oppression had occasioned —if it had remitted the punishment of the perjury of the king, to the tribunal of Him, by whom *kings reign and princes decree justice*.

And are there any men in this kingdom, except such as find their account in public confusion, who would hazard the introduction of such scenes of rapine, barbarity, and bloodshed, as have disgraced France, and outraged humanity, for the sake of obtaining—What?—Liberty and Equality.—I suspect, that the meaning of these terms is not clearly and generally understood : it may be of use to explain them.

The liberty of a man in a state of nature, consists in his being subject to no law but the law of nature—and the liberty
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of a man in a state of society, consists in his being subject to no law, but to the law enacted by the general will of the society to which he belongs.—And to what other law is any man in Great Britain subject? The king, we are all justly persuaded, has not the inclination; and we all know that, if he had the inclination, he has not the power, to substitute his will in the place of the law. The house of lords has no such power; the house of commons has no such power; the church has no such power; the rich men of the country have no such power. The poorest man amongst us, the beggar at our door, is governed—not by the uncertain, passionate, arbitrary will of an individual—not by the selfish insolence of an aristocratic faction—not by the madness of democratic violence—but by the fixed, impartial, deliberate voice of law, enacted by the general suffrage of a free people.—Is your property injured? Law, indeed, does not give you property; but it ascertains it.—Property is acquired by industry and probity; by the exercise of talents and ingenuity; and the possession of it is secured by the laws of the community. Against whom think you is it secured? It is secured against thieves and robbers; against idle and profligate men, who, however low your condition may be, would be glad to deprive you of the little you possess. It is secured, not only against such disturbers of the public peace, but against the oppression of the noble, the rapacity of the powerful, and the avarice of the rich. The courts of British justice are impartial and incorrupt; they respect not the persons of men; the poor man's lamb is, in their estimation,

tion, as sacred as the monarch's crown; with inflexible integrity they adjudge to every man his own. Your property under their protection is secure.—If your personal liberty be unjustly restrained, though but for an hour, and that by the highest servants of the crown—the crown cannot screen them; the throne cannot hide them; the law, with an undaunted arm, seizes them, and drags them with irresistible might to the judgement of whom?—of your equals—of twelve of your neighbours.—In such a constitution as this, what is there to complain of on the score of liberty?

The greatest freedom that can be enjoyed by man in a state of civil society; the greatest security that can be given him with respect to the protection of his character, property, personal liberty, limb, and life, is afforded to every individual by our present constitution.

The equality of man in a state of nature, does not consist in an equality of bodily strength, or intellectual ability, but in their being equally free from the dominion of each other.—The equality of man in a state of civil society, does not consist in an equality of wisdom, honesty, ingenuity, industry, —nor in an equality of property resulting from a due exertion of these talents; but in being equally subject to, equally protected by the same laws—And who knows not that every individual in this great nation, is, in this respect, equal to every other? There is not one law for the nobles, another
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for the commons of the land—one for the clergy, another for the laity—one for the rich, another for the poor. The nobility, it is true, have some privileges annexed to their birth; the judges, and other magistrates, have some annexed to their office; and professional men have some annexed to their professions—but these privileges are neither injurious to the liberty or property of other men. And you might as reasonably contend, that the bramble ought to be equal to the oak; the lamb to the lion; as that no distinctions should take place between the members of the same society.—The burthens of the state are distributed through the whole community, with as much impartiality as the complex nature of taxation will admit; every man sustains a part in proportion to his strength; no order is exempted from the payment of taxes.—Nor is any order of men exclusively entitled to the enjoyment of the lucrative offices of the state. All cannot enjoy them, but all enjoy a capacity of acquiring them. The son of the meanest man in the nation, may become a general or an admiral, a lord chancellor or an archbishop. If any persons have been so simple as to suppose, that even the French ever intended by the term equality, an equality of property, they have been quite mistaken in their ideas. The French never understood by it, any thing materially different from what we and our ancestors have been in full possession of for many ages.

Other nations may deluge their land with blood in struggling

gling for liberty and equality ; but let it never be forgotten by ourselves, and let us impress the observation upon the hearts of our children, that we are in possession of both ; of as much of both, as can be consistent with the end for which civil society was introduced amongst mankind.

The provision which is made for the poor in this kingdom is so liberal, as, in the opinion of some, to discourage industry. The rental of the lands in England and Wales does not, I conjecture, amount to more than eighteen millions a year ; and the poor rates amount to two millions. The poor then, at present, possess a ninth part of the landed rental of the country ; and, reckoning ten pounds for the annual maintenance of each pauper, it may be inferred, that those who are maintained by the community do not constitute a fortieth part of the people. An equal division of land would be to the poor a great misfortune ; they would possess far less than by the laws of the land they are at present entitled to. When we add to this consideration, an account of the immense sums annually subscribed by the rich for the support of hospitals, infirmaries, dispensaries—for the relief of sufferers by fire, tempests, famines, loss of cattle, great sickness, and other misfortunes ; all of which charities must cease were all men on a level, for all men would then be equally poor ; it cannot but excite one's astonishment, that so foolish a system should have ever been so much as mentioned by any man of common

mon sense. It is a system not practicable ; and was it practicable, it would not be useful ; and was it useful, it would not be just.

But some one may think, and, indeed, it has been studiously inculcated into the minds of the multitude, that a monarchy, even a limited one, is a far more expensive mode of civil government than a republic ; that a Civil List of a million a year, is an enormous sum which might be saved to the nation. Supposing that every shilling of this sum could be saved, and that every shilling of it was expended in supporting the dignity of the crown—both which suppositions are entirely false—still should I think the liberty, the prosperity, the tranquillity, the happiness of this great nation cheaply purchased by such a sum ; still should I think that he would be a madman in politics, who would, by a change of the constitution, risk these blessings (and France supplies us with a proof that infinite risk would be run) for a paltry saving of expence. I am not, nor have ever been, the patron of corruption. So far as the Civil List has a tendency to corrupt the judgment of any member of either house of parliament, it has a bad tendency, which I wish it had not ; but I cannot wish to see the splendor of the crown reduced to nothing, lest its proper weight in the scale of the constitution should be thereby destroyed. A great portion of this million is expended in paying the salaries of the judges, the interpreters of our law, the guardians of our lives and properties !—Another portion is expended in maintain-

ing ambassadors at different courts, to protect the general concerns of the nation from foreign aggression ; another portion is expended in pensions and donations to men of letters and ingenuity ; to men who have by naval, military, or civil services, just claims to the attention of their country ; to persons of respectable families and connexions, who have been humbled and broken down by misfortunes. I do not speak with accuracy, nor on such a subject is accuracy requisite ; but I am not far wide of truth in saying that a fifth part of the million is more than sufficient to defray the expences of the Royal household—What a mighty matter is it to complain of, that each individual contributes less than sixpence a year towards the support of the monarchy ?

That the constitution of this country is so perfect as neither to require, or admit of any improvement, is a proposition to which I never did, or ever can assent ; but I think it far too excellent to be amended by peasants and mechanics. I do not mean to speak of peasants and mechanics with any degree of disrespect ; I am not so ignorant of the importance, either of the natural or social chain by which all the individuals of the human race are connected together, as to think disrespectfully of any link of it ; peasants and mechanics are as useful to the state as any other order of men ; but their utility consists in their discharging well the duties of their respective stations ; it ceases when they affect to become legislators ; when they intrude themselves into concerns, for which their education

cation has not fitted them.—The liberty of the press is a main support of the liberty of the nation ; it is a blessing which it is our duty to transmit to posterity ; but a bad use is sometimes made of it : and its use is never more pernicious, than when it is employed to infuse into the minds of the lowest orders of the community, disparaging ideas concerning the constitution of their country. No danger need be apprehended from a candid examination of our own constitution, or from a display of the advantages of any other : it will bear to be contrasted with the best ; but all men are not qualified to make the comparison ; and there are so many men, in every community, who wish to have no government at all, that an appeal to them on such a point, ought never to be made.

There are, probably, in every government upon earth, circumstances which a man, accustomed to the abstract investigation of truth, may easily prove to be deviations from the rigid rule of strict political justice ; but whilst these deviations are either generally not known, or, though known, generally acquiesced in, as matters of little moment to the general felicity, I cannot think it to be the part, either of a good man or of a good citizen, to be zealous in recommending such matters to the discussion of ignorant and uneducated men.

I am far from insinuating, that the science of politics is involved in mystery ; or that men of plain understandings

should be debarred from examining the principles of the government, to which they yield obedience. All that I contend for is this—that the foundations of our government ought not to be overturned, nor the edifice erected thereon tumbled into ruins, because an acute politician may pretend, that he has discovered a flaw in the building, or that he could have laid the foundation after a better model.

What would you say to a stranger, who should desire you to pull down your house, because, forsooth, he had built one in France or America after, what he thought, a better plan? You would say to him—No, sir—my ancestors have lived in this mansion comfortably and honourably for many generations; all its walls are strong, and all its timbers sound; if I should observe a decay in any of its parts, I know how to make the reparation without the assistance of strangers; and I know too, that the reparation, when made by myself, may be made without injury either to the strength or beauty of the building. It has been buffeted, in the course of ages, by a thousand storms; yet still it stands unshaken as a rock, the wonder of all my neighbours, each of whom sighs for one of a similar construction. Your house may be suited to your climate and temper, this is suited to mine. Permit, me, however, to observe to you, that you have not yet lived long enough in your new house, to be sensible of all the inconveniences to which it may be liable; nor have you yet had any experience

rience of its strength ; it has yet sustained no shocks ; the first whirlwind may scatter its component members in the air ; the first earthquake may shake its foundation ; the first inundation may sweep the superstructure from the surface of the earth. I hope no accident will happen to your house, but I am satisfied with mine own.

Great calamities of every kind attend the breaking up of established governments—yet there are some forms of government, especially when they happen to be badly administered, so exceedingly destructive of the happiness of mankind, that a change of them is not improvidently purchased, at the expence of the mischief accompanying their subversion. Our government is not of that kind : look round the globe, and see if you can discover a single nation on all its surface, so powerful, so rich, so beneficent, so free and happy as our own ? May Heaven avert from the minds of my countrymen the slightest wish to abolish their constitution !

“ Kingdoms,” observes Mr. Locke, “ have been overturned by the pride, ambition, and turbulency of private men ; by the people’s wantonness and desire to cast off the lawful authority of their rulers, as well as by the rulers’ insolence, and endeavours to get and exercise an arbitrary power over the people.” The recent danger to our constitution was in my opinion small ; for I considered its excellence to be so obvious to
men

men even of the most unimproved understandings, that I looked upon it as an idle and fruitless effort, either in foreign or domestic incendiaries, to endeavour to persuade the bulk of the people to consent to an alteration of it in favour of a republic. I knew, indeed, that in every country the flagitious dregs of a nation were always ripe for revolutions; but I was sensible, at the same time, that it was the interest, not only of the opulent and powerful; not only of the mercantile and middle classes of life; but even of honest labourers and manufacturers, of every sober and industrious man, to resist the licentious principles of such pestilent members, shall I call them, or outcasts of society. Men better informed and wiser than myself, thought that the constitution was in great danger. Whether in fact the danger was great or small, it is not necessary now to inquire; it may be more useful to declare, that, in my humble opinion, the danger, of whatever magnitude it may have been, did not originate in any encroachments of either the legislative or executive power on the liberties or properties of the people; but in the wild fancies, and turbulent tempers of discontented or ill informed individuals. I sincerely rejoice that, through the vigilance of administration, this turbulency has received a check. The hopes of bad men have been disappointed, and the understandings of mistaken men have been enlightened, by the general and unequivocal judgment of a whole nation; a nation not more renowned for its bravery and its humanity, though justly celebrated for

9 both,

both, than for its loyalty to its princes, and, what is perfectly consistent with loyalty, for its love of liberty, and attachment to the constitution. Wise men have formed it, brave men have bled for it, it is our part to preserve it.

R. LANDAFF.

London, Jan. 25,
1793.

F I N I S.

(12)

The following is a list of the names of the persons who have been elected to the office of Justice of the Peace for the year 1900.

1. J. H. Smith

2. J. H. Smith

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